

Homeschoolers' Mass

The Annunciation

Every day we pray the Our Father and every day we also pray the Hail Mary - and you teach your children to do the same. How wonderful, then, that we have come together as the homeschooling community in the Archdiocese of Baltimore on this Feast of the Holy Name of Mary.

In the Hail Mary, we repeat the words of the Angel Gabriel addressed to Mary at the Annunciation: "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you." Mary's name is holy because she is full of grace, because the Lord is with her. In his loving Providence, God had prepared Mary for this moment by preserving her from original sin and indeed for all sin and by bringing her to the very holiness her Son would one day make manifest. As the Fathers of the Church are fond of saying, 'Mary conceived the Word of God in her heart before she conceived Him in her womb.'

In the Annunciation, the Angel spoke directly and personally to the Virgin Mary, but, like all the mysteries of salvation, the Annunciation took place for our sakes, for the sake of our salvation in Christ Jesus. When we listen to the words of the Angel in the Gospel, it is as if we become witness to the beginnings of our salvation. So when we pray the Hail Mary and when you teach your children to do the same, you are continually introducing them to that moment when the Son of God entered the world to save us from our sins.

The Fruit of Mary's Womb

As we pray the Hail Mary each day, we quickly come to the deepest reason why Mary's Name is holy. After the words, "blessed art thou among women", we say, "and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus." Mary is the Mother of God, the Mother of our Savior. As St. Louis de Montfort taught, "[she] brought to a dry and barren world the Fruit of Life."

In the Blessed Virgin Mary, in the holy name of Mary, the Mother of God, we see the grand fulfillment of Jesus' words in today's Gospel: "A good tree does not bear rotten fruit, nor does a rotten tree bear good fruit. For every tree is known by its fruit" (Luke 6:43). In an Advent homily, St. Bernard of Clairvaux compared Mary to "the

tree of Paradise, whose fruit is Christ” (cf. H. DeLubac, *Splendor of the Church*, 240-241). From the fullness of Mary’s heart, we have received Christ and, as those adopted by God in Baptism, we too, as members of the Church, are Mary’s children.

The Fruit of Your Womb

In the end of the Rite of Baptism, the parents of the newly baptized child are blessed. The blessing of the mother contains this beautiful line: “God the Father, through his Son, the Virgin Mary’s child, has brought joy to all Christian mothers, as they see the hope of eternal life shine on their children...” So too, in the blessing of the father, the Church prays that he and his wife “may ... be the best of teachers, bearing witness to the faith by what they say and do.”

As parents you seek God’s blessings for the children who are the fruit of your love. You want to be like the good tree that bears good fruit or like the Blessed Virgin Mary of whom we say, “blessed is the fruit of your womb.” In living your vocation of marriage, you are enlightened by God’s Word, strengthened by the grace of the sacraments, & buttressed by your daily life of prayer. Blessed is the fruit of your womb, when they, like you, hope for eternal life. Blessed is the fruit of your womb when their minds are opened to Christ, their minds instructed in the Faith, and their wills are strengthened by virtue. And, in opening their minds and hearts to God, you more easily teach them about the wonders of his truth and love reflected in creation, in treasury of human knowledge, in beauty, and in the skills that are necessary for a productive and wholesome life.

Built on Solid Rock

As we know, Mary and Joseph cooperated fully with God’s plan of salvation. Mary’s name is holy because of her total consecration to God, her complete acceptance of all that God asked of her, an obedient love, mirrored also in Joseph, the foster-father of Jesus.

As Mary brought forth the Savior, she and Joseph established a loving home, a family wherein Jesus could grow in age and wisdom (Luke 2:52) as he prepared for his public ministry. Their home was built on the solid rock of their complete obedience to all that God had asked of them, summed up in Mary’s phrase, “Let it be done to me according to your word.”

You have come here to invoke the Holy Name of Mary so that you make take the words of today's Gospel to heart by continuing your efforts to build your homes on the solid rock of obedience to all that God commands of us in Christ Jesus. In God's will is our peace and every form of human flourishing. By obeying God we discover our true freedom and dignity. By answering his call, we discover the true secret of greatness.

Thank you for dedication to the education and formation of your children. By doing so, you strengthen both the Church and wider society and you open up vistas of hope and opportunity for your families. In this context, I ask you to pray for vocations; just two days ago we buried the Rector of this historic Basilica, Msgr. Valenzano, a wonderful priest who brought so many, including the young, to Christ. Pray that God will raise up many like him to serve as priests and religious. And join me in praying for a strengthening of married couples and that many young people will see the truth and beauty of this vocation.

Through the intercession of Mary, may our lives bear the good and lasting fruit of the Gospel and may homes be set on solid rock of God's truth and love. God bless you and keep you always in His love!